

TOP 12 STORIES OF THE YEAR

# Aggieland

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**ALSO INSIDE**  
AI SPORTSPERSON OF THE  
YEAR ALEX CARUSO  
AND MORE...

# 13

## AGGIES DRAFTED BY MLB TEAMS

KYLE SIMONDS  
THROWS NO-HITTER  
AGAINST VANDY



END OF THE YEAR ISSUE • \$3.95





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**On the Cover:** Kyle Simonds delivers pitch against Vandy in no-hitter. Photo by Rob Havens '88.





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# Howdy Ags!

The dog days of summer are here and it's time again to look back at last years accomplishments and look forward to next year. This is a different summer for me as I was able to attend my middle son's new student conference at A&M. In the fall I will have a senior and a freshman at A&M, and I couldn't be more excited.

Looking back over the 2015-2016 school year to come up with the Top 12 stories of the year is always an interesting task. I hope you enjoy looking back at the stories we chose in this issue of AI.

Aggie basketball gave us so many exciting moments last year, including beating Kentucky and watching the team cut down the nets after winning the SEC Championship. No one will forget the second round of the NCAA Tournament and the miracle comeback with 44 seconds left.

The reopening of Kyle Field will be something we will all remember. If you didn't make it back to Aggieland last fall, you have to get here and check it out. I'm looking forward to seeing the changes new offensive coordinator Noel Mazzone makes with our new starting quarterback and a second year defense under Coach Chavis.

As our football team goes through the grind of summer workouts the Aggie football staff is continuing to recruit the best talent in the country and tweets of YESSIR continue to post in the twittersphere. Most experts are not expecting much from our football team, which is fine for Coach Sumlin who was quoted at a recent Coaches night, "I like where we are. I like our attitude. And I like the fact that people don't think we're worth a damn. That's alright with me. We're going to be alright."

I remember not too long ago when people didn't expect much, and we went 11-2 and beat the hell outta Oklahoma in the Cotton Bowl. I am anxious to see what this team will do in the fall. All reports suggest that team chemistry is outstanding and these guys are ready to play. September 3<sup>rd</sup> will be here before we know it. I predict hot weather and a hungry team!

Gig'em Ags!

*Rob '88*





# Aggieland

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## historic celebration...

Kyle Simonds is swarmed by his teammates after throwing the 13<sup>th</sup> no-hitter in Aggie baseball history. The talented junior completed the no-no victory against the #5 Vanderbilt Commodores with a final score of 3-0. Proving it takes a team to accomplish the rare feat, the Aggie defense made play after play to secure a special place in history for Simonds.

Photos by Rob Havens '88.









snapshot





## saw varsity's horns off! short...

Third baseman, Riley Sartain, fires a bullet to cut down Texas shortstop Devon Tunning. The Aggies hammered tu 9-3 in the elimination game of the NCAA Lafayette Regional. Coach Evans said, "I thought it was a great team win. All throughout the lineup you saw kids stepping up and helping us win."

Photo by Sarah Pyatt '14.











## to the “Victor” go the spoils...

SEC Men's Field Athlete of the Year, Lindon Victor became the first Aggie to win a national championship in the NCAA decathlon. He tallied 8,379 points over the two-day event in a tight competition where the top five athletes all scored over 8,000 points. Victor set a new national record at the SEC Championships in May, where he won the decathlon and qualified for the Olympic Games in Rio.

Photos by Errol Anderson.



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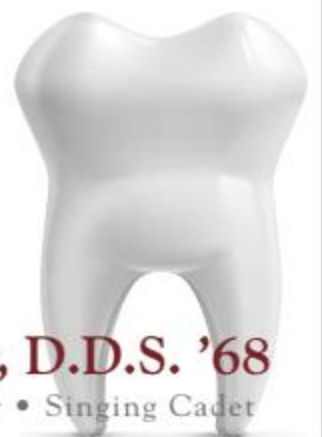
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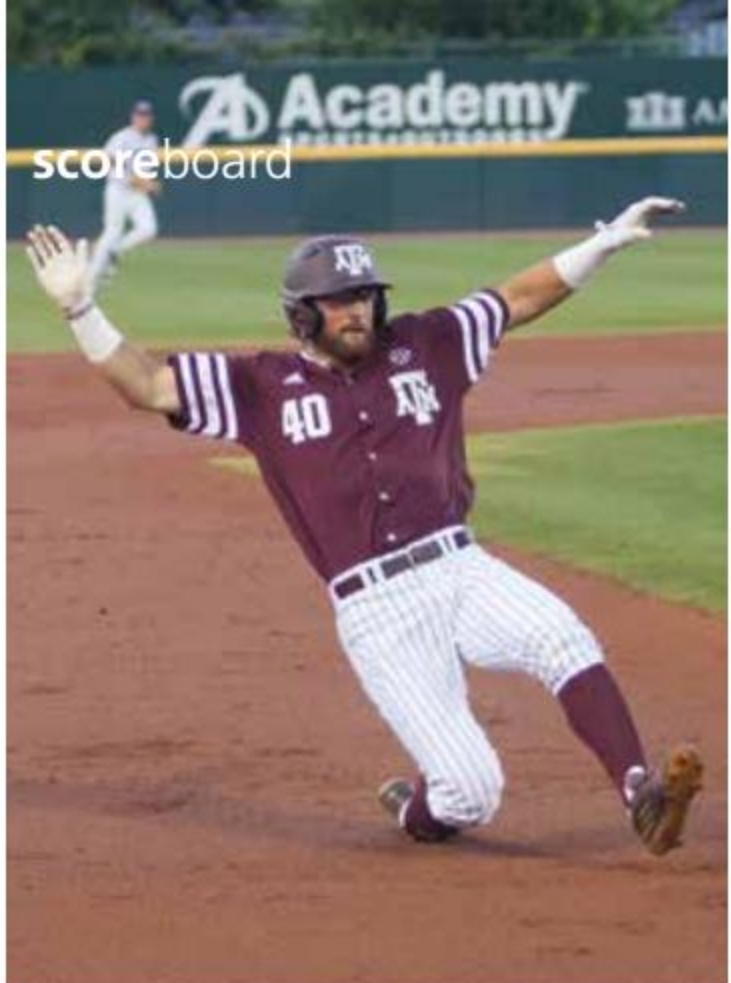
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scoreboard



**[baseball]** The Aggies had an amazing regular season, winning all but one series against the toughest league in the nation. They fell just one game short of winning the regular season crown. They went to Hoover for the SEC Championship and came all the way back from the loser's bracket to beat Florida in the final game and clinch the SEC Tournament crown. They returned home to a champions welcome and were rewarded with a #4 national seed in the NCAA tourney. The Aggies swept the Regional here in College Station after beating all three teams. For their dominance during the year, they were ranked #1 in several polls and earned a rematch with TCU in the Super Regional, which the Aggie's hosted this year. They lost game one, but bounced back forcing a third and deciding game. The team fought hard but came up just short losing 4-1. The team had 13 players drafted by MLB teams, leading the nation with the most players taken.





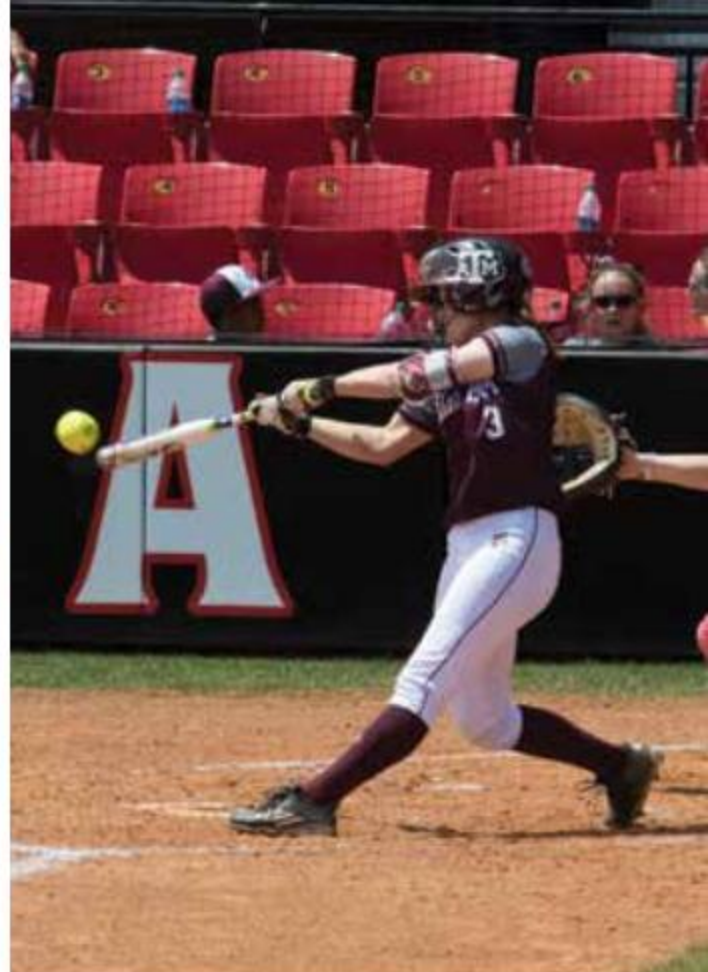
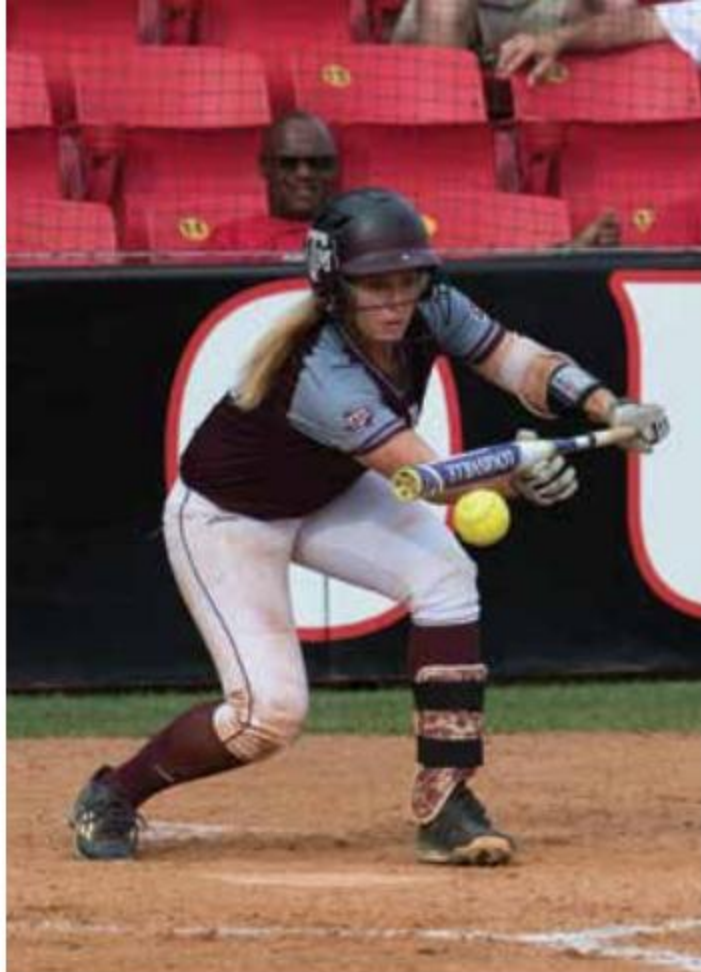
scoreboard



**[track & field]** Texas A&M's men's track team wrapped up the outdoor season with a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish at the NCAA National Track Meet in Oregon. Some of the highlights of the meet included Donovan Brazier who won the NCAA 800m title, breaking a 50-year-old collegiate time record with an amazing time of 1 minute, 43.55 seconds. Latario Collie won the national title in the NCAA triple jump and for the first time in program history, Lindon Victor won the decathlon for Texas A&M. The women's team was paced by Shamier Little, who won her third consecutive 400-meter hurdles title with a career best time of 53.51 seconds. Maggie Malone won the national championship in the NCAA javelin with a collegiate record throw of 204-0. The team placed 5<sup>th</sup> in the national meet.







**[softball]** Texas A&M softball made its 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive appearance in the NCAA Tournament. They earned a #2 seed in the Lafayette, LA Regional and a date with long-time rival Texas. The Ags struggled in the first game, suffering a 5-0 defeat. They bounced back quickly taking down Boston 6-0 and setting up a rematch with tu. In the second game against the Horns, Texas A&M dominated them, wracking up a 9-3 victory and sending them home. In the championship bracket game the Ags battled the host team into extra innings but fell in nine innings 9-8. Coach Evans' young team returns almost every player next year and should be a favorite to make waves next season.







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# ALEX CARUSO

AGGIELAND ILLUSTRATED'S SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR

BY ROB HAVENS '88

Texas A&M had an amazing year across the board in every sport. So when we tried to come up with our annual sportsperson of the year, it wasn't an easy decision. How blessed we are that our great university attracts phenomenal athletes from all around the world. Not only are they the best at their given sport, but we get some of the finest men and women of character that play Division 1 sports. The Aggies' basketball program didn't have to go all over the world to find this year's recipient, as he played high school ball just ten minutes away from Reed Arena. The 2015-2016 Aggieland Illustrated Sportsperson of the Year is Alex Caruso.

It's been well documented that the talented guard was a ball boy for the Aggies as a kid and as fans we got to see him grow from a freshman into the talented player he is today. Fortunately for me, I started watching Alex play as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at College Station Middle School. My son went to school with him, so I've had the pleasure of watching him develop over the past nine years.

As a middle schooler, you could tell he was a special player. He was always a cerebral player that played with fire and was a leader on and off the court. At A&M Consolidated, he got even better and was a lot of fun to watch as he took charges and made no-look circus passes that drew "ooohs" from the crowd.

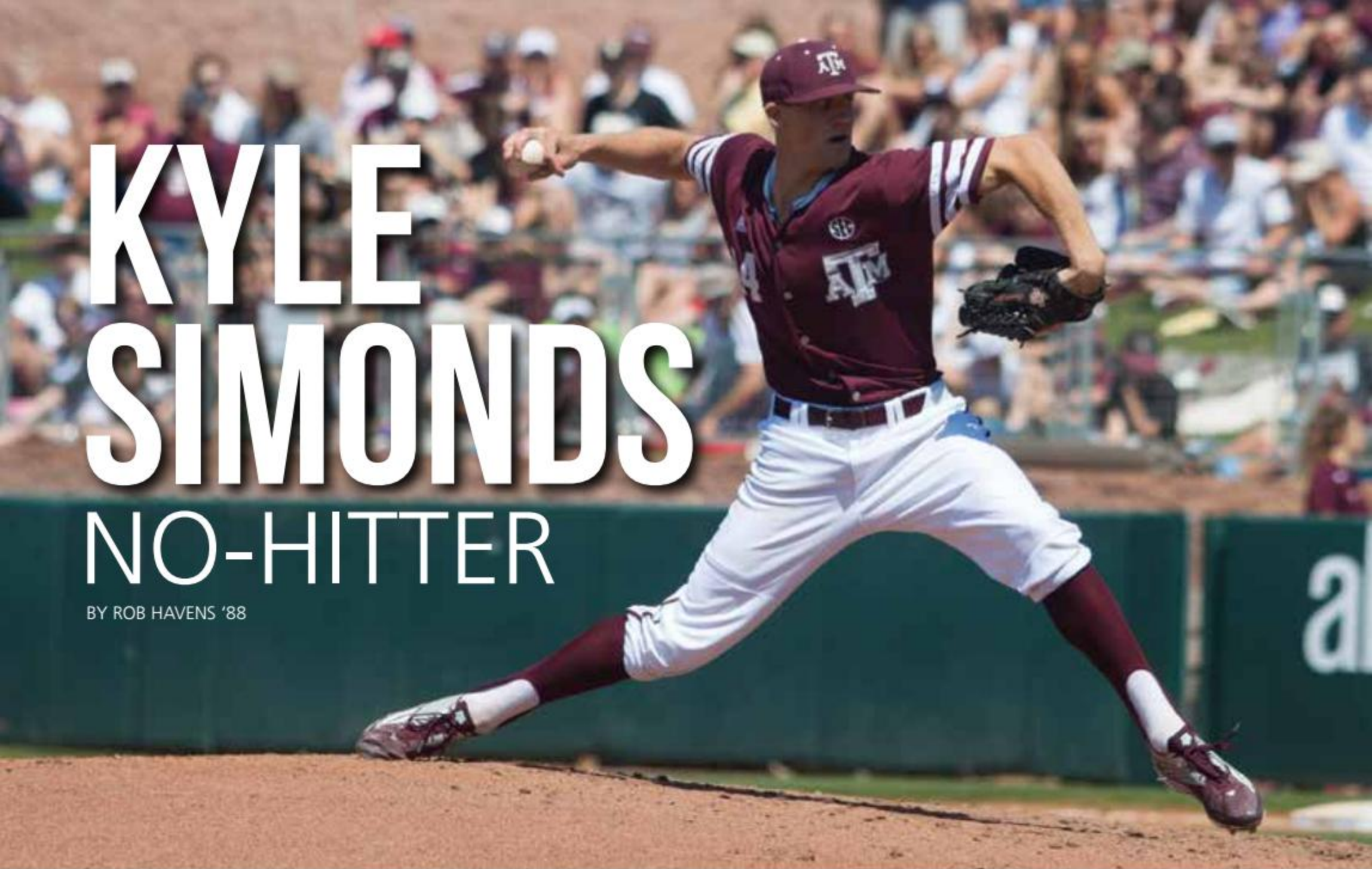
When Caruso got to A&M as a freshman, he made an instant impact on the team. He consistently led the team in assists and broke the record for steals by the end of his freshman year. Over his four years at A&M, he was a consistent starter that did whatever it took to win. If you needed him to run the point, he would. Needed him to score, he would. Needed him to get a steal, he was the best.

This year was a special year for Texas A&M Basketball. A lot of the credit for that goes to Alex Caruso. Not only did he score, rebound, share the ball and take charges, he was like having another coach on the floor. CBS Sports named him SEC Defensive Player of the Year. He leaves A&M as the career leader in assists and steals.

Caruso led the team to 28 wins, the most in program history. The Aggies won their first SEC Championship, which was their first regular season crown since 1986. The team matched their deepest run in the NCAA tourney making it all the way to the Sweet 16. Alex was the heart of this team and played a huge role in the greatest comeback with less than a minute in NCAA history, when the Ags beat UNI in the second round of this year's tournament.

Alex loves Texas A&M and was an integral part in the resurrection of the program. This year's club played in sold out arenas and beat big time opponents and rose to #5 in the polls, matching a program best. Over his four years, he dedicated himself to not only winning but also trying to raise the program to another level. Texas A&M Basketball is better because Alex Caruso played here. We are proud to select him as Aggieland Illustrated's Sportsperson of the Year and we wish him luck as he continues to chase his dream of playing professional basketball.





# KYLE SIMONDS NO-HITTER

BY ROB HAVENS '88

**A no-hitter is one of the most** special things in sports. At any level, it is one of the toughest achievements that a baseball pitcher can accomplish. It had been 22 years since a pitcher had done it in SEC play. So when Kyle Simonds and the Aggie Baseball team took the field on Saturday May 7<sup>th</sup> against the team that advanced all the way to the Championship game of the College World Series last year, it seemed improbable that it would happen that day.

It was a sunny afternoon and the Aggies were attempting to win the rubber game of the three-game series. In a top five contest of schools attempting to lock down a national seed, there was plenty on the line for both universities. The Aggies came into the contest having won 15 of their previous 18 games, with only two home losses.

The Commodores had won a 6-1 decision the night before and their pitching staff had allowed only one earned run in two games by the Ags. Simonds was coming off his first career complete game win at Arkansas and

the Aggies needed him to have another standout performance. Little did they know, he would provide that and more in the historic contest.

The Dores came out swinging and Simonds got two quick outs in the first before the only blemish of the day occurred on a groundball to short. Knowing there was one of the fastest guys on the team batting, Austin Homan was unable to set his feet in order to get the ball to first. The ball sailed on him, posting an error and giving Vandy their only base runner for the day. Simonds induced a grounder back to himself on the next batter and the Ags were back in the dugout.

Over the next eight innings, Kyle was magical on the mound and the Aggie defense was stellar in the field. Vanderbilt was aggressive at the plate and Simonds dealt three different pitches for strikes getting them to ground out, fly out or strike out sitting down 25 consecutive batters as he rolled up inning after inning.

Austin Homan broke the scoring seal in the bottom of the fifth inning by depositing a Patrick Raby offering over

the left field fence giving the Aggies a 1-0 lead. Boomer White increased the score when he singled to score J.B. Moss who earned his way on base with a single of his own.

The Ags added an insurance run in the bottom of the seventh when Choruby grounded back to the pitcher allowing Homan to race home from third. The Aggies carried a 3-0 lead into the ninth creating an exciting high-tension environment for the last three outs.

Simonds later said that he had lost track of the innings as the Aggie pitcher sat down batter after batter. The players continued to keep things loose in the dugout and Coach Childress didn't say a word to Simonds after he left the bench for the second inning. Aggie catcher Michael Barash had a smile from ear to ear as Simonds mowed through the lineup and Barash continued to encourage Simonds to keep it going.

Kyle jogged out to mound in the ninth with an opportunity to make history. Facing the eighth, ninth and one-hole hitter, Simonds said he expected the



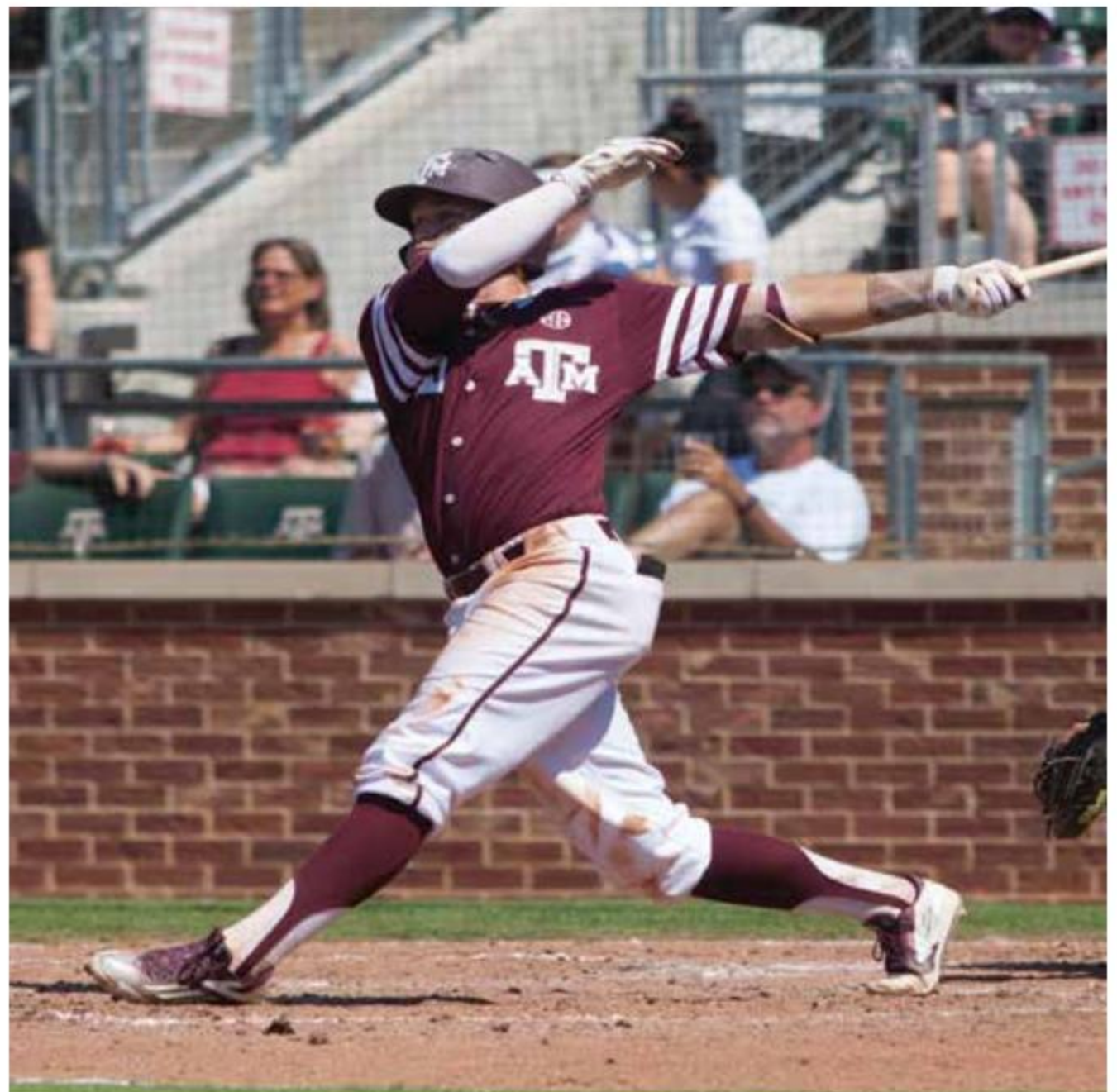
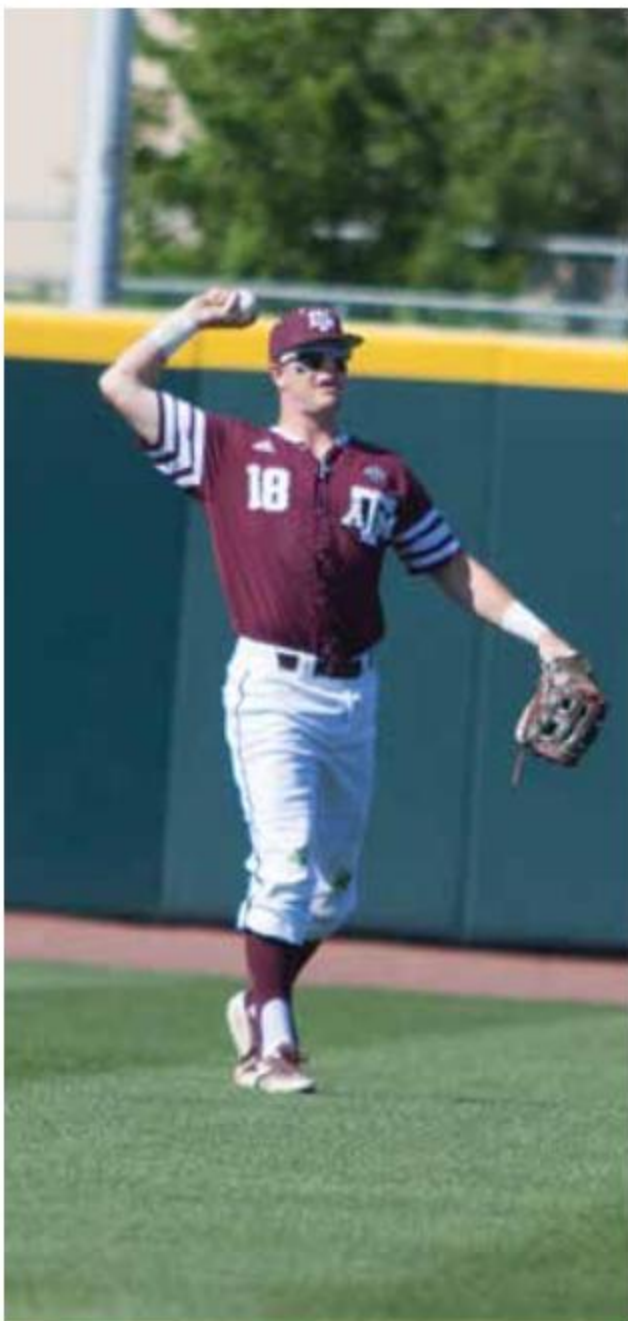
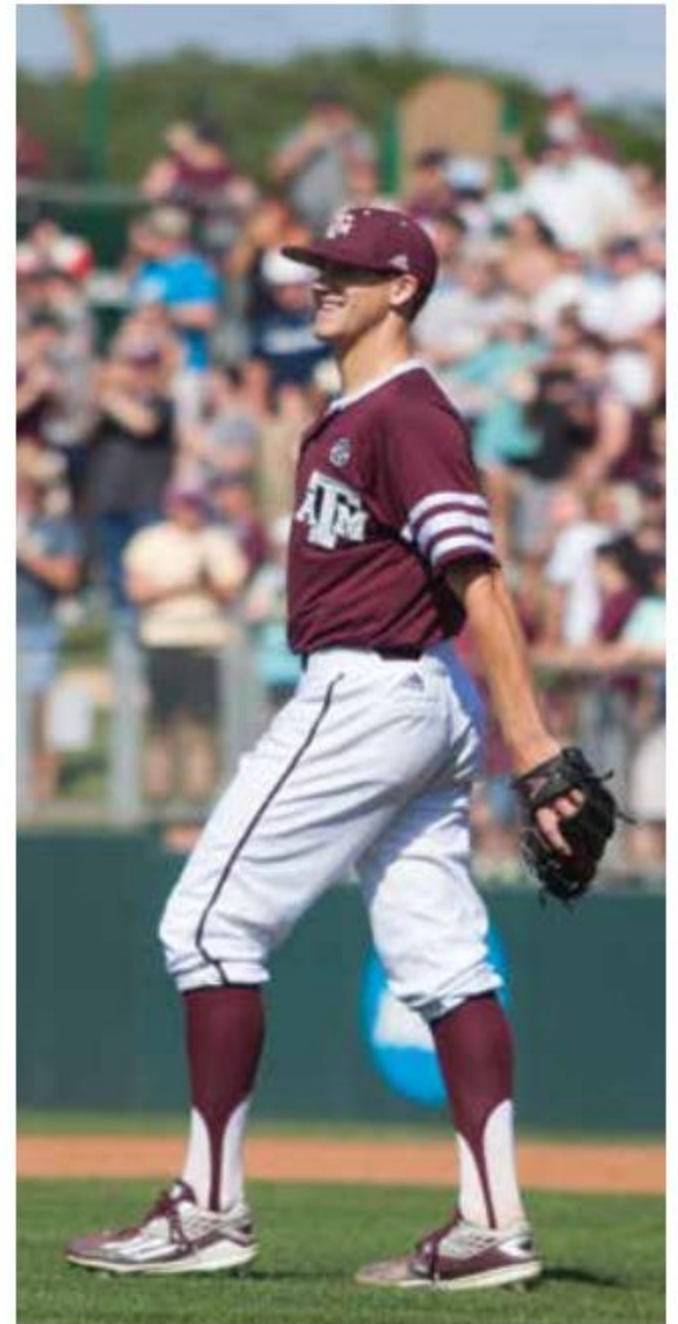
hitters to take a few pitches to change things up. But the first batter, Tyler Campbell hit the second pitch he saw sizzling on the ground right back to Kyle and he jogged over and underhanded a toss to Melton for the first out.

In every no-hit bid there always seems to be a defensive play that decides the game. The next play will be the one Simonds and the rest of Aggie fans will remember for a long time. With one out in the last inning Connor Kaiser looped the first pitch he saw to shallow center field. A grown from the sold-out crowd filled the air as the ball seemed to die on the open area of grass in front of the centerfielder. Nick Choruby broke on the ball right after it left the bat and sprinted to it's final resting place. At the last second, he dove with an outstretched glove squeezing the baseball before sliding across the grass. There was a moment of silence as the crowd held their breath and then Nick jumped to his feet beside the field umpire who rang up the out and sent the 12<sup>th</sup> Man into hysteria. Even Simonds couldn't help but break out into a huge smile as he waved at his

teammate who kept the no hitter intact.

As Simonds took to the rubber for the final batter, he took a deep breath and released the pitch to the Commodores best hitter. Jeren Kendall fired a ball right back up the middle that Kyle stabbed at and it lodged in his glove! Simonds raised his arms in the air and spiked the baseball to the ground as Barash raced to the mound and embraced him. The dugout emptied and the Aggies rushed the field to hug and congratulate their teammate. Bubbles filled the air and high fives all around as the 6,550 in attendance got to see one of the rare events in baseball.

Each one of his teammates embraced him as the talented pitcher used only 83 pitches to take down the Dore. He pounded the strike zone with 58 strikes and with his teammates playing amazing defense behind him, he threw only the 13<sup>th</sup> no-hitter in program history. He was able to win the game and the series in dramatic fashion and keep the Aggies in position for a national seed.





# TOP 12 STORIES







# 01

## AGGIE BASKETBALL WINS SEC CHAMPIONSHIP & A TRIP TO THE "SWEET 16"

This past season of Aggie basketball was an exciting and historical one as the team won their first SEC Championship. The talented team led by seniors Alex Caruso, Danuel House, Jalen Jones & Anthony Collins won a program high of 28 games and advanced to the "Sweet 16". Along the way, they had the biggest comeback in NCAA history as they defeated Northern Iowa in the second round of the NCAA Tournament after trailing by 12 points with 44 seconds left in regulation. The game was recently named as one of the Top 10 comebacks in the history of sports by ESPN. Reed Arena was packed again and the nation watched as the team climbed the rankings moving all the way to #5 in the polls. The future looks bright for the Aggies as newcomers Tyler Davis, Admon Gilder, DJ Hogg & Tonny Trocha-Morelos made an instant impact on the program. The team had big wins over the likes of Kentucky, Texas, Gonzaga, Baylor, Florida & LSU. It was easily the biggest story of the year for Aggie Athletics.

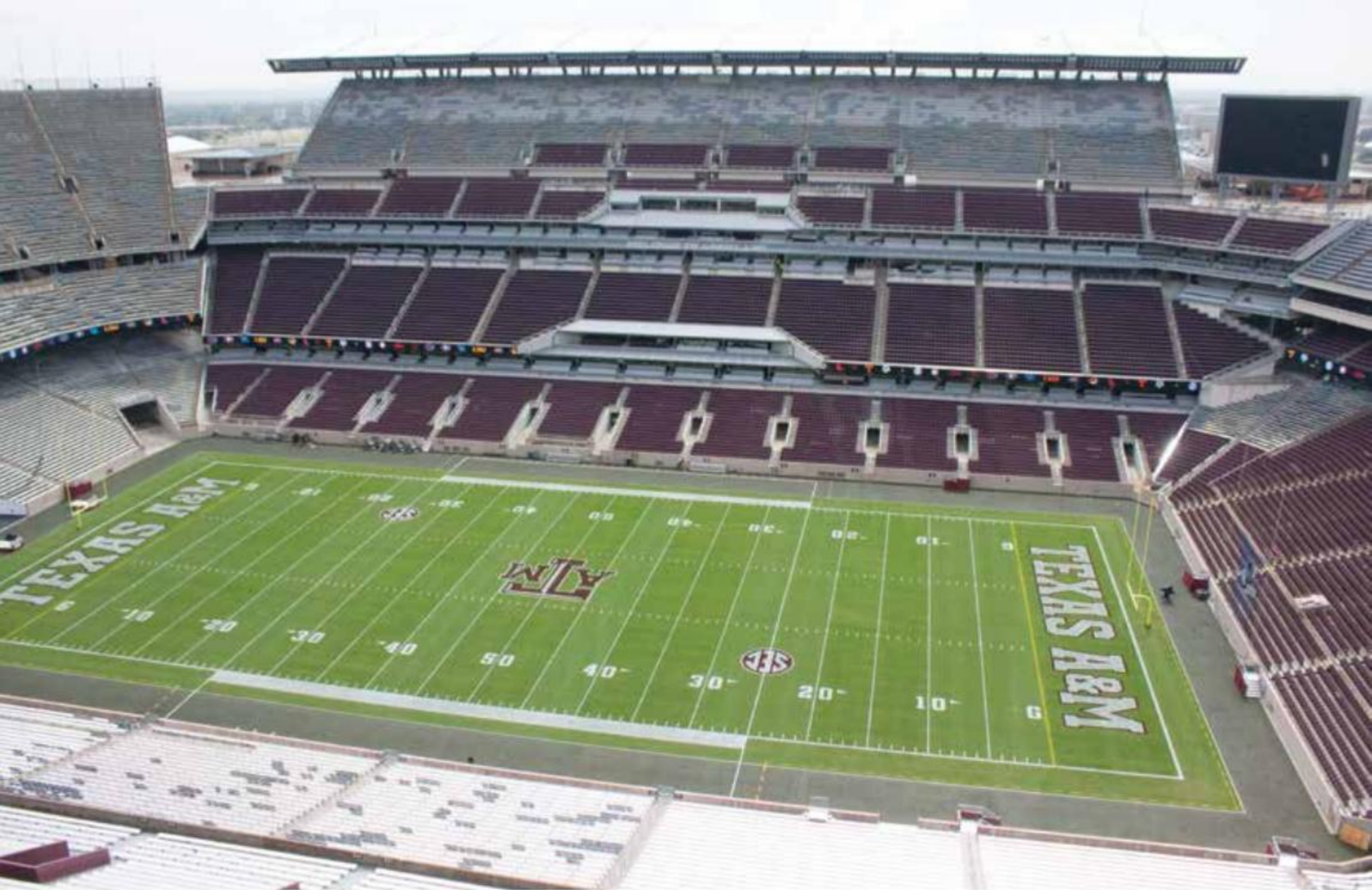
# 02

## THE HIRING OF NEW ATHLETIC DIRECTOR SCOTT WOODWARD

The new year brought big changes at the top of Aggie Athletics as Eric Hyman announced he would be stepping down. A few days later, Texas A&M President Michael K. Young announced he had found his replacement and Scott Woodward would be the new Director of Athletics. Woodward had served as the AD at the University of Washington since January of '08 and the Husky Athletic Department flourished under his direction. He led a staff of more than 200 people and oversaw a department with over \$100 million a year in revenues. He is a graduate of LSU and worked for the school for several years so he was very familiar with the Tiger's rival in College Station. Upon his arrival Woodward promised the Aggie faithful "We will compete for championships across the board and we will do so with integrity, class and a commitment to our student-athletes."







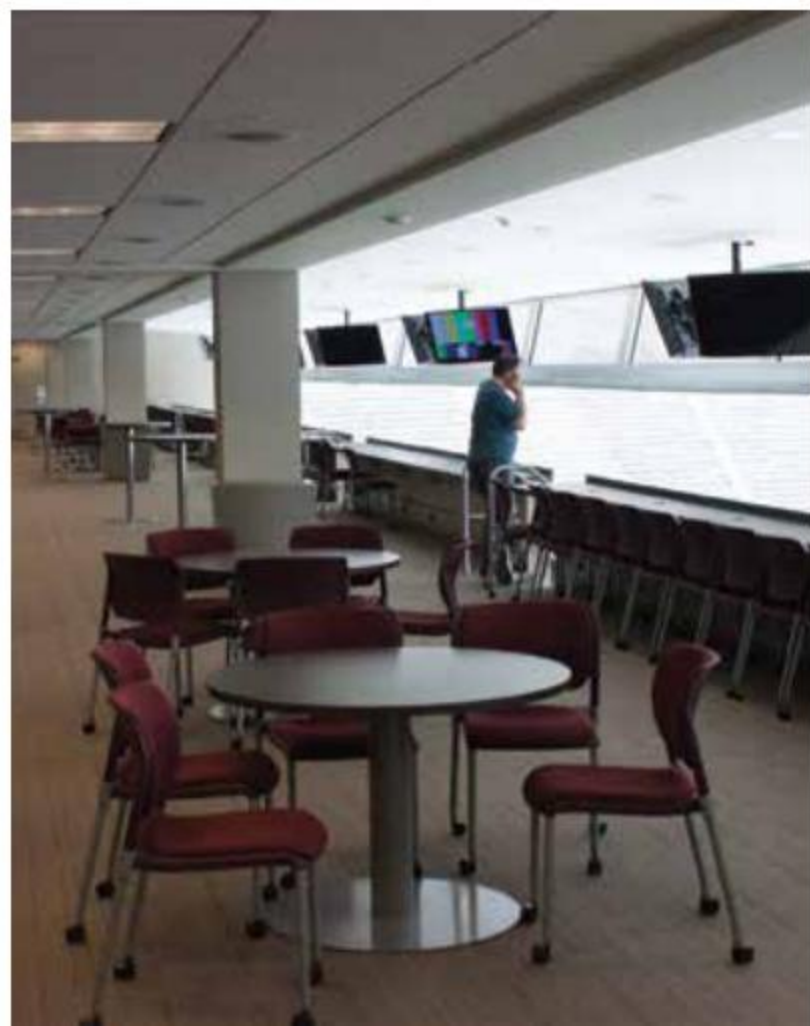
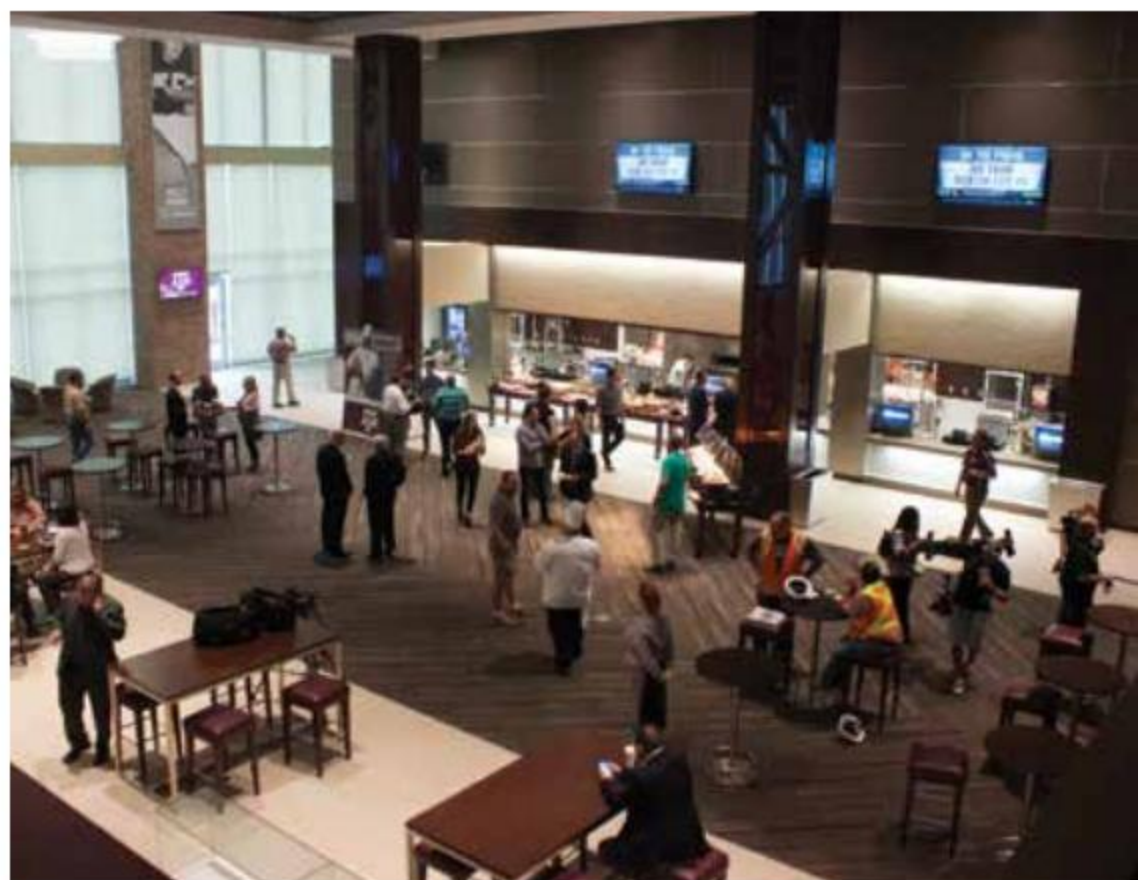
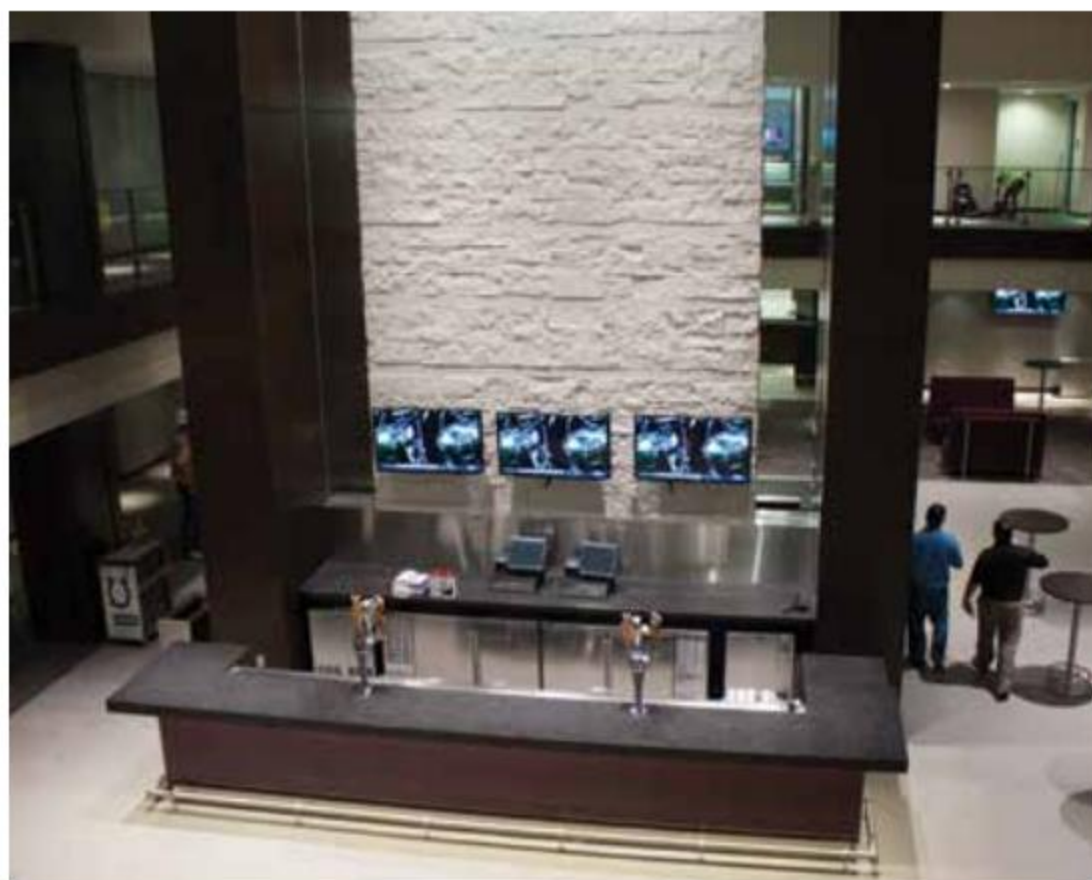
# 03

## REOPENING OF KYLE FIELD

They say everything is bigger in Texas and now when you talk about college football stadiums there aren't any bigger in the state of Texas, or in the SEC, than Kyle Field. In less than two years, Kyle Field received a makeover that made it into arguably the best college football facility in the nation. On Friday, September 11, Kyle Field opened its doors to the 12<sup>th</sup> Man who got to christen the remodeled facility with a Fightin' Texas Aggie Yell Practice. The next day, the football team destroyed Ball State 56-23 in much the same way wrecking balls took down the remains of an imploded West side. A sold-out crowd got to take in all of the amazing facilities that the new stadium has to offer. In addition to the practical changes like more bathrooms and better cell service, the stadium offers luxury suites and a game day experience unlike any you can imagine. There is the addition of the Hall of Champions, which highlights the amazing heroes of the past in Aggie Athletics. Upgraded concession areas and full-service bar areas on the West side for alums and fans to enjoy. All great modern amenities, but still the amazing atmosphere that Kyle Field is known for.











# 04

## **KYLE ALLEN & KYLER MURRAY TRANSFER OUT, TREVOR KNIGHT TRANSFERS IN**

One of the biggest stories of the '15-'16 season was the transfers of Kyle Allen & Kyler Murray. The two quarterbacks shared time as starter during the season and both had their ups and downs. Both players were five stars coming out of high school and were use to being the face of their programs. Entering this season Allen was coming off of a MVP performance at last year's Liberty Bowl. While Murray had never lost a game as a starter in high school, and was considered by many to be the best player to ever play QB in Texas high school football. Unfortunately, neither player could separate themselves as "the man" and both decided to transfer. On the bright side, the transfers allowed the Aggies to bring in former OU standout Trevor Knight at midterm as a grad transfer who was eligible to play right away. Knight brought maturity, leadership and enthusiasm to the position that the Aggies had not had for a while. Participating in the spring, Trevor brought the team together, displaying the skills and attitude that made him a winner at OU and earned the starting nod for the upcoming season. It was a tumultuous time but the Aggies seemed to have come out in better shape after the storm.





# 05

## THE HIRING OF NEW OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR NOEL MAZZONE

The last couple of years have been difficult for the Aggie football team on the offensive side of the ball. In 2012, the Ags were one of the best offenses in the country averaging 558 yards a game. In 2015, the offense fell to #50 in the country averaging 425 yards per game. Coach Sumlin needed to make a change and after the exit of Jake Spavital, he was looking for someone with great experience and a history of success that could bring the Aggies back to offensive dominance in the SEC. Mazzone spent the last four years as the OC for the UCLA Bruins and as Arizona States OC the two years before that. He has been coaching for the last 36 years and has coached for two different schools in the SEC for a total of eight years. His offenses have been successful everywhere he has coached and he has a reputation for developing quarterbacks. Coach Sumlin has known him for many years as both of them coached with each other at the University of Minnesota in the early '90s, Mazzone with QB's and Sumlin with WR's. Watching him work with our quarterbacks over the spring its obvious he has a real hands on approach to the position.

# 06

## VOLLEYBALL TEAM WINS SEC CHAMPIONSHIP FOR THE FIRST TIME

The 2015 Aggie volleyball team won its first-ever conference championship under the direction of longtime head coach Laurie Corbelli. They finished the regular season with a 14 match-winning streak and wrapped up the SEC title with a 16-2 conference record. With a winning percentage of .889, the '15 squad finished the year with the highest conference winning percentage in program history. The team fought back numerous times during the season to win matches and came together as a team to fight through adversity and win the conference title. In the tenth match of the year, talented senior and outside hitter Angela Lowak suffered a knee injury that pretty much ended her season. The team responded under the leadership of senior Shelby Sullivan and won 18 of their next 21 matches. The Ags earned the right to host the first two rounds of the NCAA tournament on their home floor. They swept A&M-Corpus Christi before falling to #7 Hawaii in the final match of the season.





# 07

## SUPER BOWL MVP VON MILLER

It hasn't always been an easy ride for Von Miller but isn't that what makes the greatest comeback stories? Did you know that former head Coach Mike Sherman once kicked Miller off the Aggie football team? He came back and became one of the greatest players to put on the Maroon & White. He became the best pass rusher in college football, won the Butkus Award and became the second overall pick in the NFL Draft. His development continued with Denver and he overcame a major injury (torn ACL) and a brief substance abuse suspension, which could have brought an end to a promising professional career. Then in February on the biggest stage in the world he had the game of his life and won the Super Bowl 50 MVP. He was a nightmare for Cam Newton and the Carolina Panthers, nailing the talented QB with two strip sacks that resulted in two Denver touchdowns. When the last pieces of confetti fell on the Broncos that day, there was no question who the MVP award would go to. Miller has become a media star since with guest appearances on late night talk shows, daytime talk shows, Saturday Night Live and more. He was even able to trade in his infamous sack dances into tangos on Dancing With The Stars with his partner Witney Carson. All the while, Von has been a marketing dream for Texas A&M, promoting the school with Gig 'ems at every event!



# 08

## KYLE SIMONDS NO-HITTER

One of the greatest feats in baseball is for a pitcher to throw a no-hitter. Entering this season, the Aggie baseball program had only had twelve pitchers accomplish the difficult task. It's hard to describe the anxiety that accompanies watching (in person) a pitcher throwing one, knowing that every pitch could be the end of the bid to do it. On Saturday, May 7, the 12<sup>th</sup> Man in attendance at Blue Bell Park got to experience this unique experience as junior rightie Kyle Simonds threw a no-hitter against #5 Vanderbilt Commodores. He struck out four batters during the contest as the Aggies played almost perfect defense behind him. As Simonds cruised along and the innings began to disappear the crowd started to realize there was something special going on. Even the twitter-sphere started to make ambiguous notes on what was going on, as to not jinx the outcome. In the ninth, with tensions high, Simonds fielded a comebacker for the first out of the inning. Nick Choruby then made an "Olympic moment" diving catch in center for the second out. Simonds completed the historic game by catching a hard line drive right back at him for the final out. The team rushed the field and the crowd went nuts as Simonds and the Aggies won 3-0 in the game of the year.



A full-page background image of a Texas A&M football player in a maroon jersey with the number 74, running on a green field. He is wearing a maroon helmet with 'AGGIES' on the face mask. In the background, another player in a maroon jersey with the number 72 is visible. The scene is set in a large stadium with many spectators in the stands.

# 09

## NFL DRAFT STREAK CONTINUES

When a student athlete signs their letter of intent to play college football, they always have a dream that one day they could be signing a contract to play in the NFL. The goal for the best athletes is to be selected in the first round. It is a lofty goal because there are so many talented players around the country. College football programs try their best to recruit the most talented players and then develop them into pro prospects. There are so many obstacles that can prevent that from happening. Grades, injuries, attitudes, and decisions they make along the way can be the difference in success or failure. A program that can continue to develop first round pick talent has figured out the formula for giving the student athlete the best chance to succeed. Germain Ifedi became the latest Aggie football player to be selected in the first round when he was picked up by the Seattle Seahawks in this year's draft. The 6'6, 324 pound offensive lineman started for three years for Texas A&M. He played his first year at guard and then moved to tackle for his final two years. The Aggies started the streak of first rounders in 2011 when Von Miller was taken with the second overall pick. Ryan Tannehill went to the Dolphins in 2012. Luke Joeckel continued the streak in 2013 when he was selected by the Jaguars. In 2014 three Aggies went in the first round Jake Matthews, Mike Evans & Johnny Manziel. Last year, Cedric Ogbuehi made it five years in a row when he was taken by the Bengals. It's pretty obvious that if you want to play in the NFL, Texas A&M is the place to be.



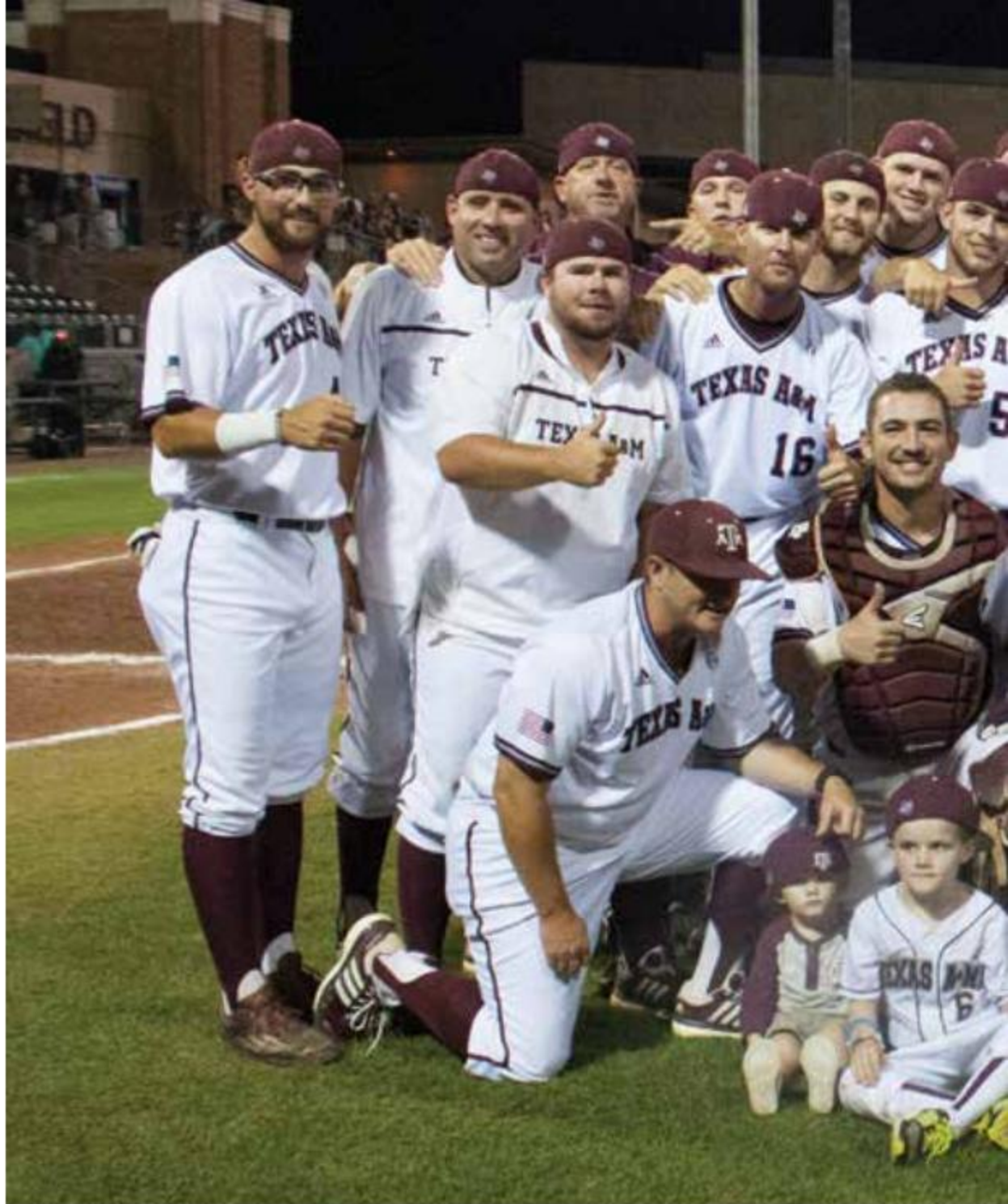
# 10

## AGGIE BASEBALL WINS SEC TOURNAMENT

When we joined the SEC, I believed that baseball would have the toughest transition because of all the talent in the league.

Easily the toughest conference in the country, with the SEC came big strapping men that towered above the competition we faced in the Big 12. In order to compete we couldn't continue to play small ball because we were facing teams that sent the ball over the fence with regularity. Over the last four years, the team took their lumps while battling the best teams in the conference. This year was the culmination of four years of hard work. Coach Childress fielded a team of veterans that his staff recruited and developed over the past few years. As a result, this year's team dominated their opponents winning all but one regular season series. They moved all the way to the top of the college baseball world as they were ranked #1 in several polls going into the NCAA Tourney. The team came one win away from winning the regular season crown but a trip to Hoover for the SEC Tournament erased those memories.

The Aggies lost their first game of the tournament and then came back to win four in a row to collect their first SEC Championship! Facing competition that rivals the eight teams that go to Omaha, this team fought back, time after time to win the crown. They were welcomed home by a huge crowd at Olsen after winning the programs first SEC Championship.



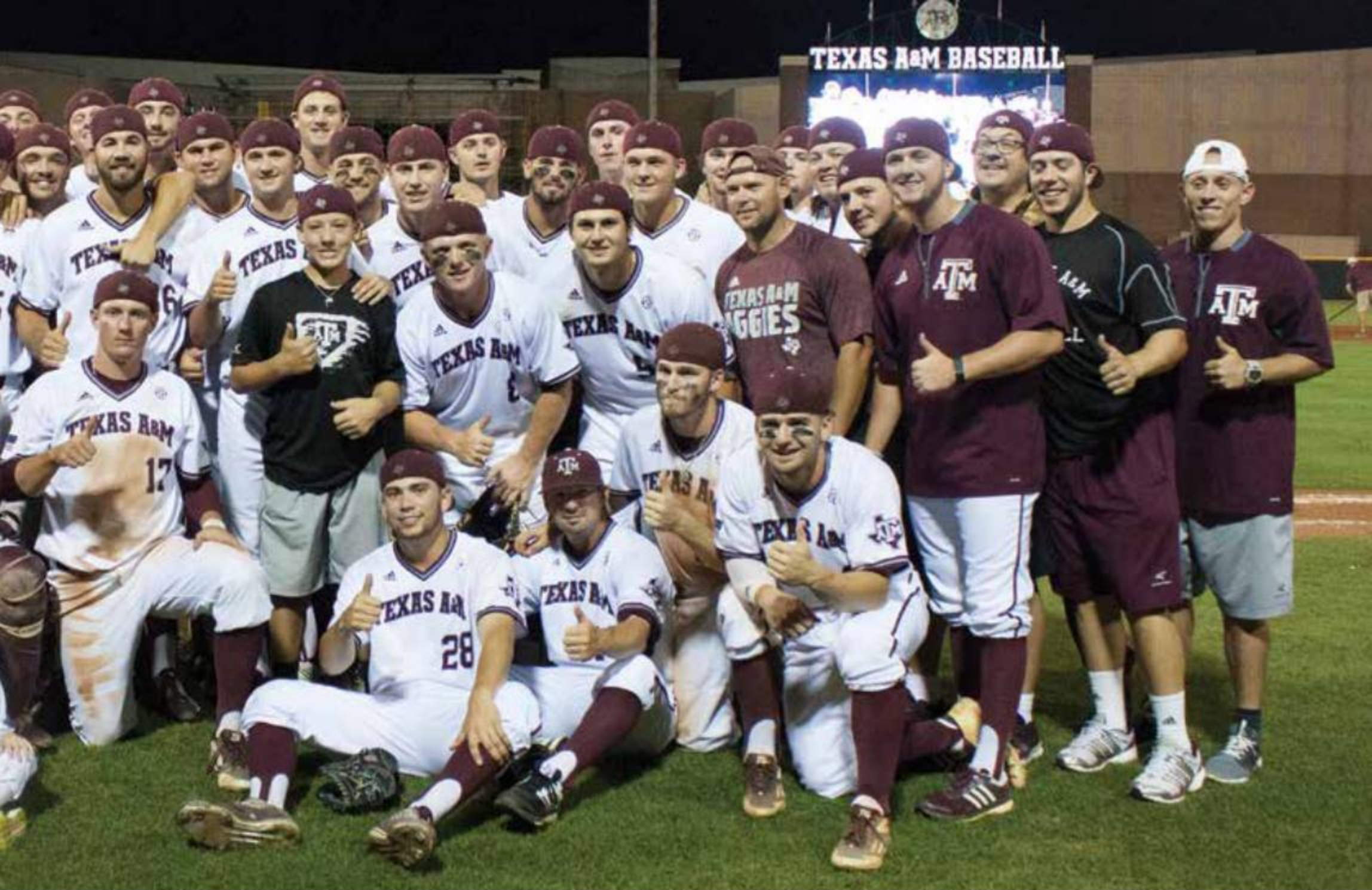
# 11

## AGGIE WOMEN'S SWIMMING & DIVING WINS FIRST SEC CHAMPIONSHIP

For the first time since joining the conference, the A&M women's swimming & diving team brought home the SEC championship hardware. The team won the event hosted at the Mizzou Aquatics Center, which was the site of the women's last conference championship as a member of the Big 12 conference. The Georgia Bulldogs had won the last six SEC Championships, but the Aggies came from behind to win the five-day event beating out LSU & Georgia, who finished second and third respectively. In addition to winning the team event, sophomore Lisa Bratton won the 200-yard IM and the 200-yard backstroke. Sydney Pickrem got first in the 400-yard IM and Sarah Gibson won the 100-yard butterfly. Bethany Galat took gold in the 200 breaststroke, giving the team much needed points. The team of Bratton, Caneta, Gibson and Gastaldello took first in the 400-yard medley relay. In addition to the first place finishes, the team earned points across the board in different events to help the team win the meet.







# 12

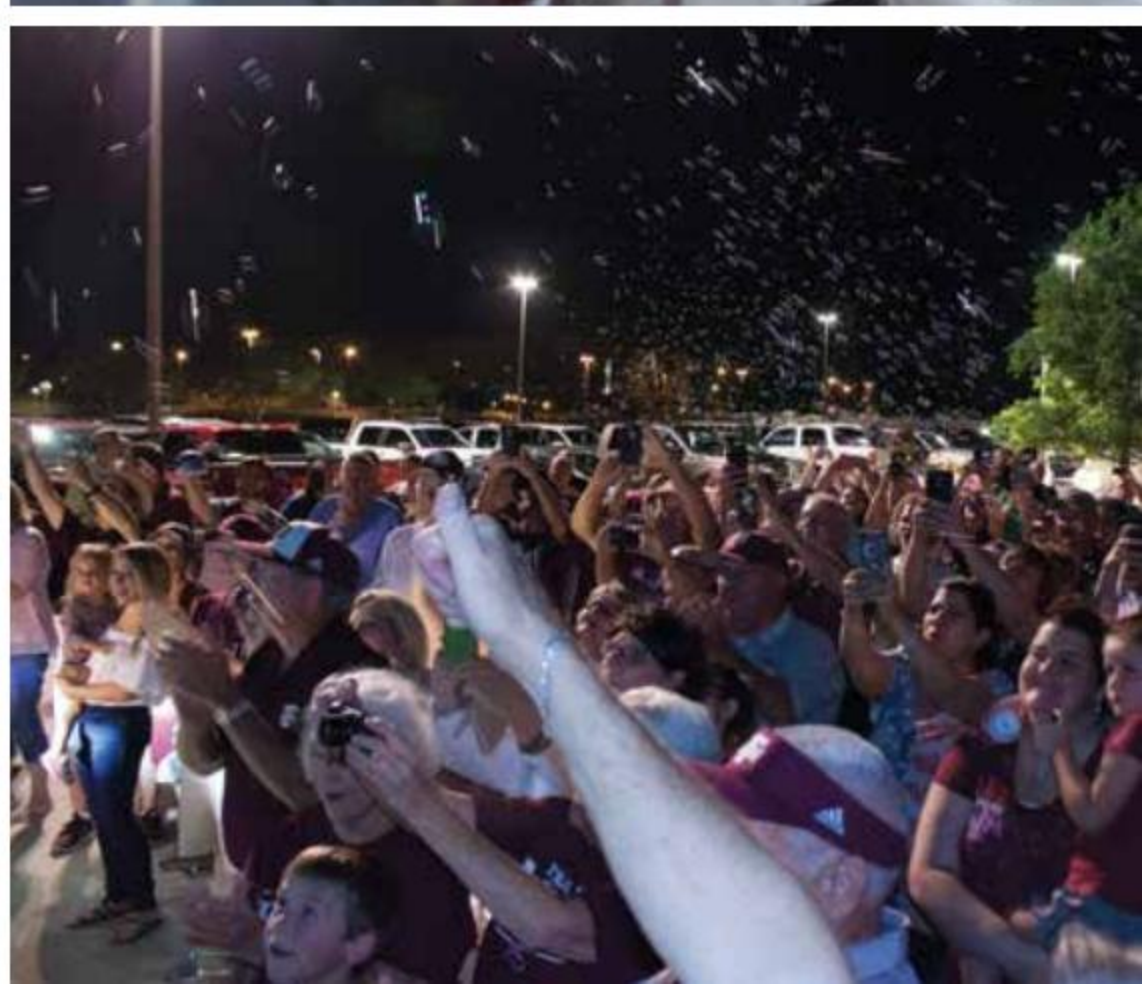
## AGGIES ARE ONLY D1 SCHOOL TO SEND EVERY SPORT IT SPONSORS TO THE POSTSEASON

Aggie Athletics showed the nation this year that we can compete in every sport. We already knew that, but when the dust settled and the stats were updated, the Aggies were the only Division 1 school that sent every sport it sponsored to the postseason. In addition to that, the Aggies won SEC Championships in multiple sports. The men's basketball team won their first SEC regular season championship and were ranked as high as #5 in the nation during the season. Women's volleyball picked up their first conference championship. Aggie baseball won the SEC Tournament Championship in Hoover, Alabama, and finished the regular season as the number one team in the polls. Our women's swimming & diving team collected their first SEC Championship over Georgia who had won the title the last six years. It was another great year for sports and the future continues to look bright in Aggieland.





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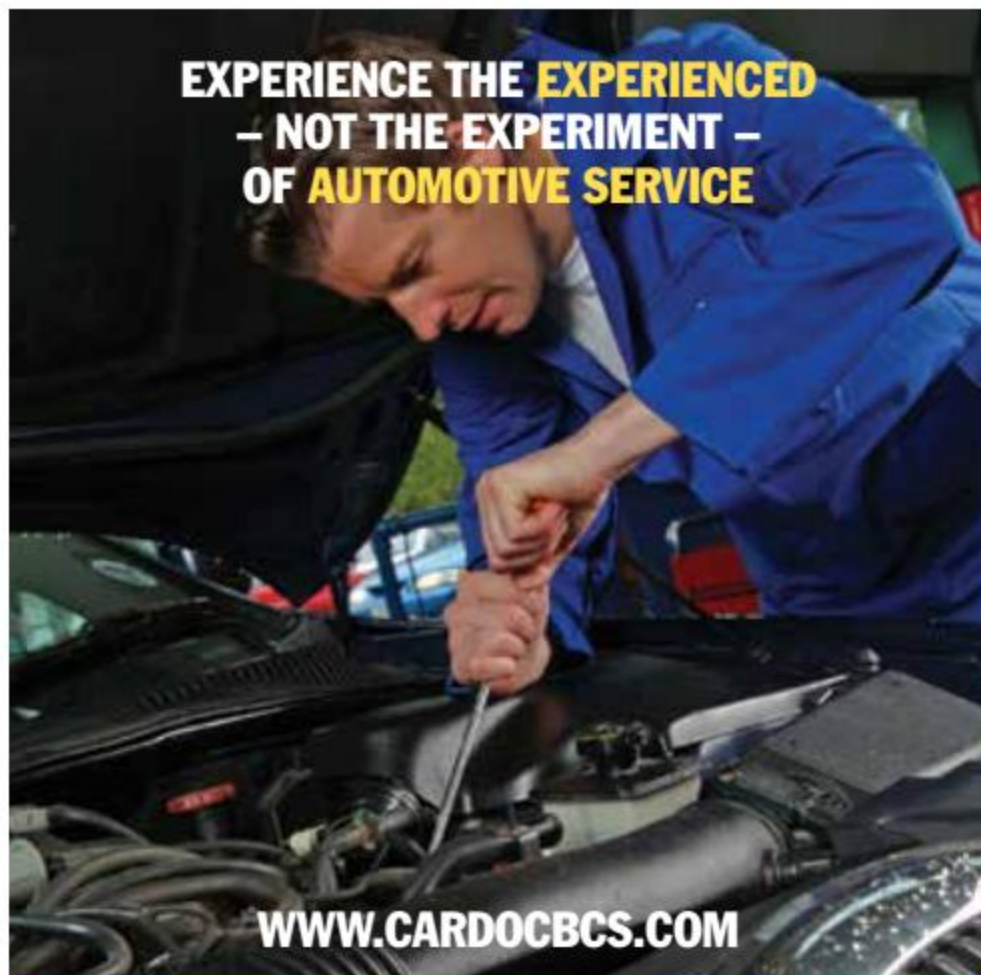
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